

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT SERVICES



HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
LAND TO THE EAST OF
54 & 56 HIGH CAUSEWAY
WHITTLESEY
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Prepared For
Rose Homes (EA) Ltd

By
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APS Report No: **94/19**

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Planning Application No.F/YR19/0514/F

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1. SUMMARY

A programme of historic building recording was required prior to the demolition of a World War II air raid shelter on land to the east of 54 & 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire.

The shelter lies within the grounds of 56 High Causeway, a Grade II Listed Building and as such is afforded curtilage listing due to its association with the house.

The shelter's floor plans, elevations and other details were recorded in writing, graphically and photographically.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of Archaeological Building Recording

Building recording is defined as: *'a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building, structure, or complex and its setting, including its buried components on land or under water.'*¹

2.2 Planning Background

A planning application (F/YR19/0514/F) was submitted for the residential development (three dwellings) of land to the rear of 54 and 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire. The development will necessitate the demolition of the World War II air raid shelter situated in the grounds of no. 56 High Causeway, a Grade II Listed Building. The Planning Officer for Fenland District Council advised that an archaeological condition would be placed on any planning consent granted and therefore, an Archaeological Historic Building Recording is required prior to the demolition of the shelter in response to a brief issued by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET) and in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the (CHET). Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Rose Homes (EA) Ltd to undertake the work which was carried out on 22nd October 2019.

2.3 Site Location

Whittlesey is a civil parish in the Fenland district of Cambridgeshire. The town is located 8km east of Peterborough. The proposed development site lies in the core of Whittlesey on the east side of High Causeway at National Grid Reference TL 27160 97277. The shelter is at the easternmost end of the site lying at approximately 9m AOD.

3. AIMS

In accordance with the written scheme of investigation, the aims of the work were to provide a record of the standing historic building on the site prior to its demolition conforming to the requirements of an Historic England Level 2 survey as a minimum, and in accordance with CIFA *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and structures* (2019).

4. METHODS

Recording of the building was undertaken in accordance with Historic England guidelines 2016 and ALGAO guidelines 1997.

¹ Cifa 2019

Subject to accessibility, the recording of the building included:

- A photographic survey showing the building in its context, general and detailed views of the exterior, interior views of the principal rooms and circulation areas and structural or decorative details.
- Dimensioned plans and a cross section of the shelter as existing, which will incorporate details of the form and location of any structural or decorative features of historic interest; supplemented by
- A written record providing an account of the building's location, type, materials and possible dates.

Photographic recording was undertaken with a digital camera. An index of the photographs was compiled on an annotated register. The photographic record comprises high-quality digital uninterpolated images of at least 8 megapixels taken using a camera with an APS-C or larger sensor. Appropriate scales were used. Digital photographs intended for archive purposes comply with best practice available at the current time – i.e. high quality non-proprietary raw files (DNG) and TIFF images as stated in *Deposition of Archaeological Archives in Cambridgeshire* 2019, 16.2.5.



Plate 1. Oblique view of the shelter, looking northeast

5. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

The shelter lies in the garden of No. 56 High Causeway, a Grade II Listed Building. The house is described thus:

“Cottage. Late C17, C19 and 1984. Timber framed with wattle and daub infill on brick base, and C19 plaster rendered walls incised in imitation of stone ashlar. Reed thatched roof, steeply pitched with ridge stack. Three bay, lobby entry plan with gable end to road. One storey and attic. Gable end has one C20 flush frame hung sash with small panes above an early C19 canted bay, renewed 1984. Doorway in side wall to lobby. Adjoining are C19 additions of several

Historic Building Recording, 54 & 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire

building periods. One is a kitchen of brick, rubblestone and timber framing with reed thatch roof. Inside: One of the original abutting hearths has been removed and an early C19 staircase inserted. Open-string with square section balusters, mahogany rail and scroll tread ends. Marble fireplace surround to possible inglenook in room to road. Straight upward bracing from main posts to wall plates, Original shelving to C19 pantry”.

Historic mapping shows that the boundaries of the site have remained unchanged since the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map of 1888 although there were some internal divisions that have since been removed. The 1:2,500 map of 1970 shows the unchanged boundaries although, in the position of the shelter, there is no record of a structure (Fig.1).

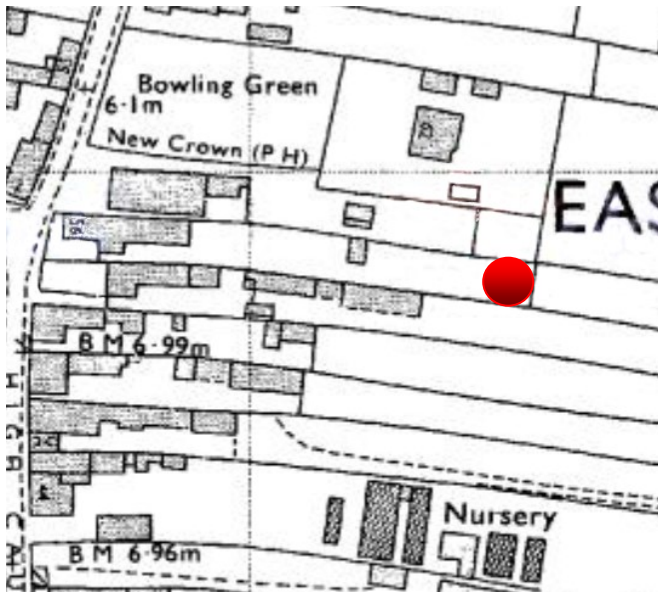


Figure 1.
Extract from the 1970 edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map with the position of the shelter marked in red

6. FABRIC EVIDENCE (Figs. 4 & 5)

The shelter is constructed mainly from concrete beams with some brick walling in the entrance structure. The structure has been constructed to a below ground level of 1.75m (approximately 6ft) and the internal dimensions will be discussed below. The spoil has been replaced over the concrete roof.



Plate 2. The south elevation of the shelter entrance

The access point for the shelter is constructed from brick and concrete slabs. The southern wall to the shelter 'porch' is constructed from brick laid in stretcher bond.² The wall is angled, the front measuring 1.3m from the top of the concrete roof slab to ground level and 0.7m at the rear. The wall has been rendered inside and out.

² Each course of bricks laid lengthways

Historic Building Recording, 54 & 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire

The sloping roof above the stair is formed from a single 1.53m x 1.53m x 0.1m (5' x 5' x 3") concrete slab. To the east is a 0.5m step down to the 1.53m x 1.22m x 0.1m (5' x 4' x 3") flat slab that covers the entry to the shelter over the base of the stairs.



Plate 3. Oblique view of the shelter looking southeast

The northern wall of the entrance is formed from a pre-cast concrete slab laid on its edge and cut to form the angle for the roof.

The remainder of the bunker structure is of concrete beams and is topped with earth, presumably from the excavation of the bunker.



Plate 4. The entrance to the shelter, looking east

Access to the shelter is through the porched aperture of 46" (1.17m) in height. It is not clear whether or not this was originally covered with earth also. The angled brick wall extending from the north wall of the entrance suggests that more earth was banked here and that this may have served as a retaining wall for the soil.



Plate 5. The stairs entering the shelter

The stairs into the shelter are constructed from precast concrete beams and are mortared one on top of the other down the excavated slope. They pass under an angled roof beam, presumably to strengthen the weaker area of the shelter. At the base there is another raised slab over a poured concrete floor.



Plate 6. Internal view of the shelter, looking south

Once entered, the floor space of the shelter measures approximately 1.83m x 3.35m (11' x 6') and is 1.83m (6') in height. The entire below-ground construction is of precast concrete beams. The size of the beams could not be readily determined as much of the shelter had been roughly plastered and painted. An internal house door may be a later addition (see discussion).



Plate 7. Detail of the date in the northwest corner



Except for immediately adjacent to the entrance, a concreted over lip of bricks, approximately five courses, runs along each of the walls in order to support bench seating. The remains of this are present along the north wall. Just below this, the date of '1940' has been written twice.

In the ceiling are three metal tubes acting as ventilation through holes drilled in the pre-cast concrete.

Plate 8. Internal view of the shelter, looking north

No other internal fixtures or fittings are present within the shelter.

7. DISCUSSION

During March of 1940 the government embarked on a programme of building 'street communal shelters' for pedestrians to use during air raids. Often poorly built, the programme was mostly abandoned the same year with people being urged to construct their own shelters with materials provided by the government³. The shelter at High Causeway appears to have been one of these early home-built shelters if the inscribed date internally is accurate. The nature of the materials, mainly pre-cast concrete slabs and beams was also seen regularly on airfield defensive structures across the country and so are likely to have been provided by the authorities.

Many shelters were semi-sunken, such as the most commonly known 'Anderson Shelter',⁴ but this shelter has been, apart from the entrance, constructed completely below ground. As the war progressed, many air raid shelters were constructed to a set design with curved roofs, and this non-standard buried bunker design, along with the date inside suggests that this was a privately built early bomb shelter. The bench seating corroborates this also as it was designed for short term occupancy, rather than the later shelters with beds provided when prolonged air raids were anticipated.

The sloping roof over the entrance and the angled beam inside above the stairs suggests an attempt to re-inforce the weakest point of the structure. This may at one time also have been covered by some of the earth excavated during the construction of the shelter.

Some thought appears to have been given to the construction of the shelter and its position at the far end of the owned plot of land associated with the house. At the time of construction, this position was in fairly open ground, away from buildings to the west with only the cemetery to the east; a place less likely to have been targeted and out of the line of a direct bomb-strike, something which the shelter would not withstand.

An intriguing feature of the shelter is the internal door. The frame in which it sits is contemporary with the construction of the shelter. There are no different hinge marks that suggest that an earlier door was present, but the fact that a glazed door has been used is entirely inappropriate for an air raid shelter/bunker of this type. The danger caused by flying glass would have been considerable. Two explanations present themselves. The door, architecturally of the same period as the construction of the shelter, may have been a later replacement after the war when the shelter took on a different use. It is possible that it was hung using the same hinges as the previous door. Another explanation is that, as this was an early shelter, those constructing it had no experience or knowledge of bomb strikes, and were given minimal instruction by the authorities. As such, they did not think of the dangers of the glass in the door. Although nearby Peterborough was not heavily bombed, there were minor air raids between 1940 and 1941 with the heaviest night of bombing occurring on 10th August 1942 when 250 bombs were dropped by two aircraft (Peterborough War Memorial, 2019). Although air raid warnings were sounded, there is no record of Whittlesey ever having been bombed. As such, the glazed door at Whittlesey may never have become an issue that the builders thought to address.

The building recording was undertaken with the regional archaeological research imperatives⁵ in mind. The mapping and understanding of World War Two defensive structures is a growth area in the heritage of the region and similar projects have been undertaken elsewhere. The research imperatives highlight how 20th century war defence was carried down to street level, and projects such as the HLF funded 'Bunker Project' have helped identify and understand the distribution of private domestic shelters. This building

³ RAF Museum

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Medleycott 2011

recording project has the potential to add to the understanding of the construction and distribution of such shelters.

8. CONCLUSION

Historic building recording has been undertaken on an air raid shelter on land to the rear of 54-56 High Causeway, Whittlesey Cambridgeshire. The building was recorded prior to its demolition to make way for residential development. The shelter has all the appearances of a privately built, underground bunker, constructed using government provided materials and dating to the early part of the war in 1940. It was at this time that the first bombs fell on nearby Peterborough and the shelter may have been constructed as a reaction to the first air raids in the area. Built away from nearby buildings in what was open ground, the shelter was large enough to accommodate several people and may have served 56 High Causeway as well as other nearby buildings, including the adjacent New Crown public house.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to thank Steven Buddle of Rose Homes (EA) Ltd. who commissioned the work. The project was coordinated by Neil Parker. The report was edited by Mark Dymond and Paul Cope-Faulkner.

10. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Neil Parker
Building Recording: Neil Parker
Photographic reproduction: Neil Parker
CAD Illustration: Neil Parker
Analysis: Neil Parker

11. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Available at:

http://www.warmemorial.firstworldwarrelics.co.uk/air_raids
[Accessed 20th December 2019]

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Available at:

<https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/history-of-the-battle-of-britain/air-raid-shelter-protection.aspx>

[Accessed 22nd November 2019]

12. ABBREVIATIONS

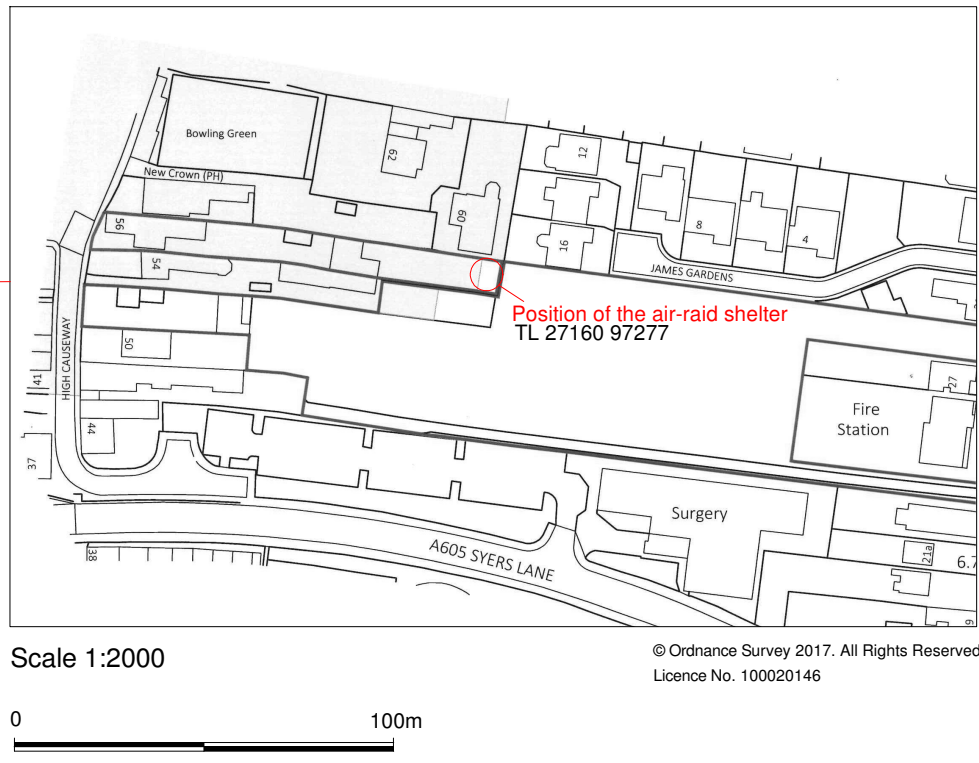
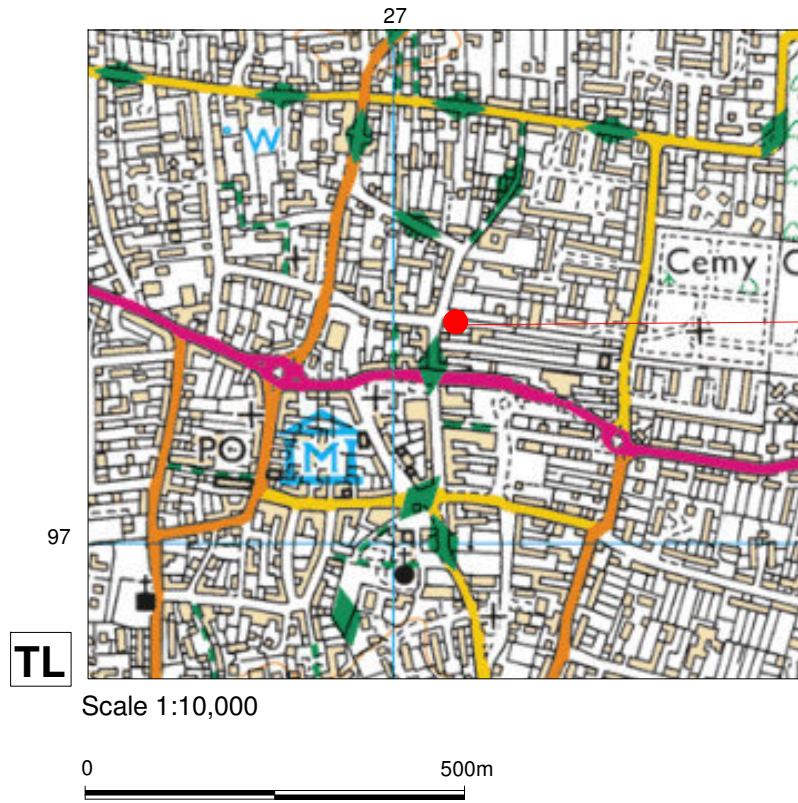
AOD Above Ordnance Datum

CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

OS Ordnance Survey



Figure 2 - General location map



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT SERVICES		
Project Name: High Causeway, Whittlesey		
Scale various	Drawn by: NP	Report No: 94/14

Figure 3. Site location

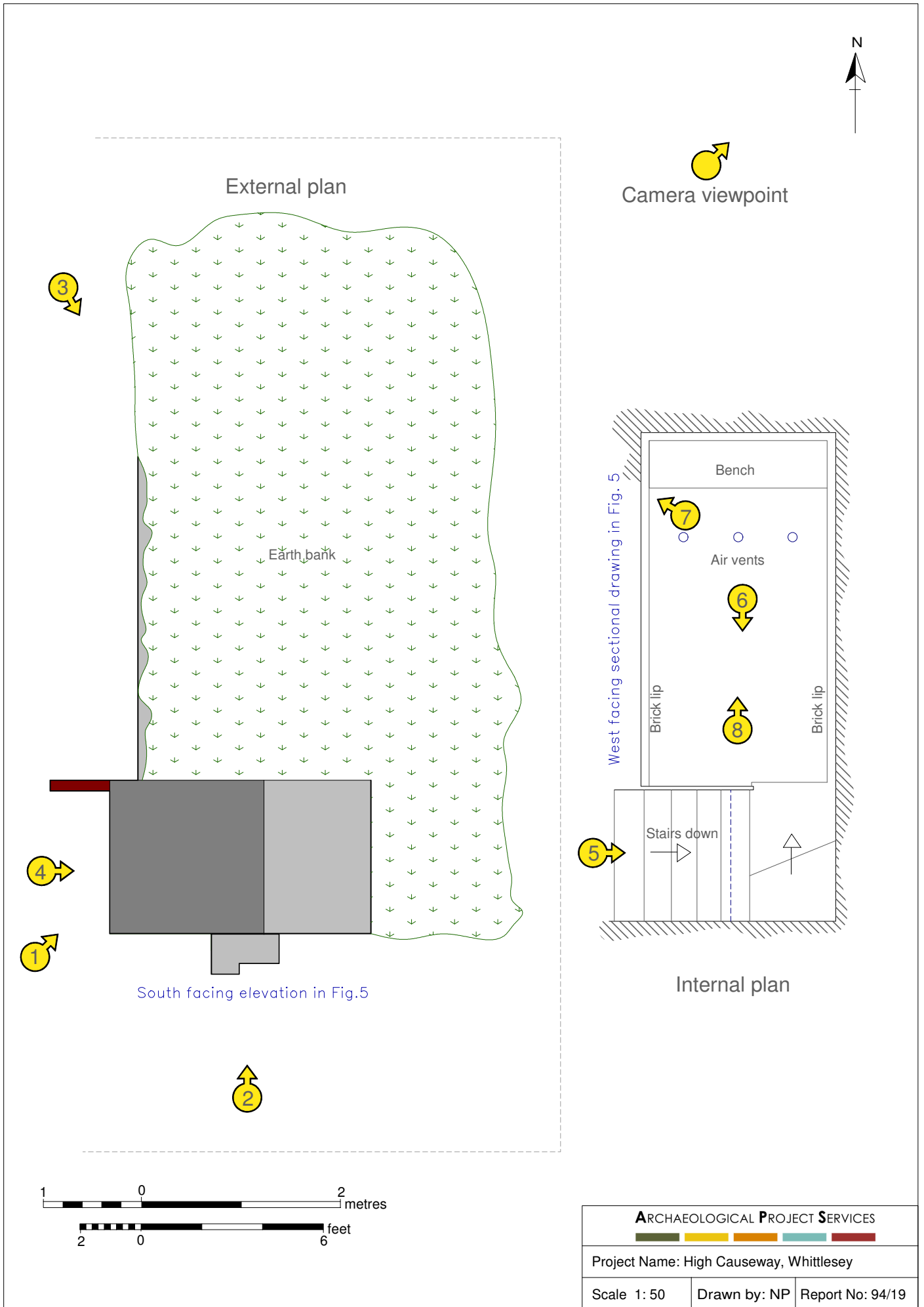
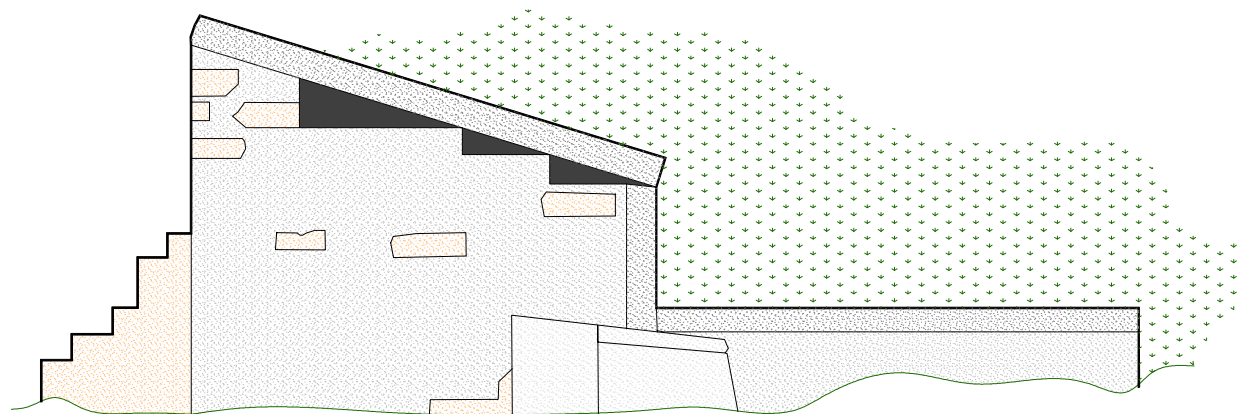
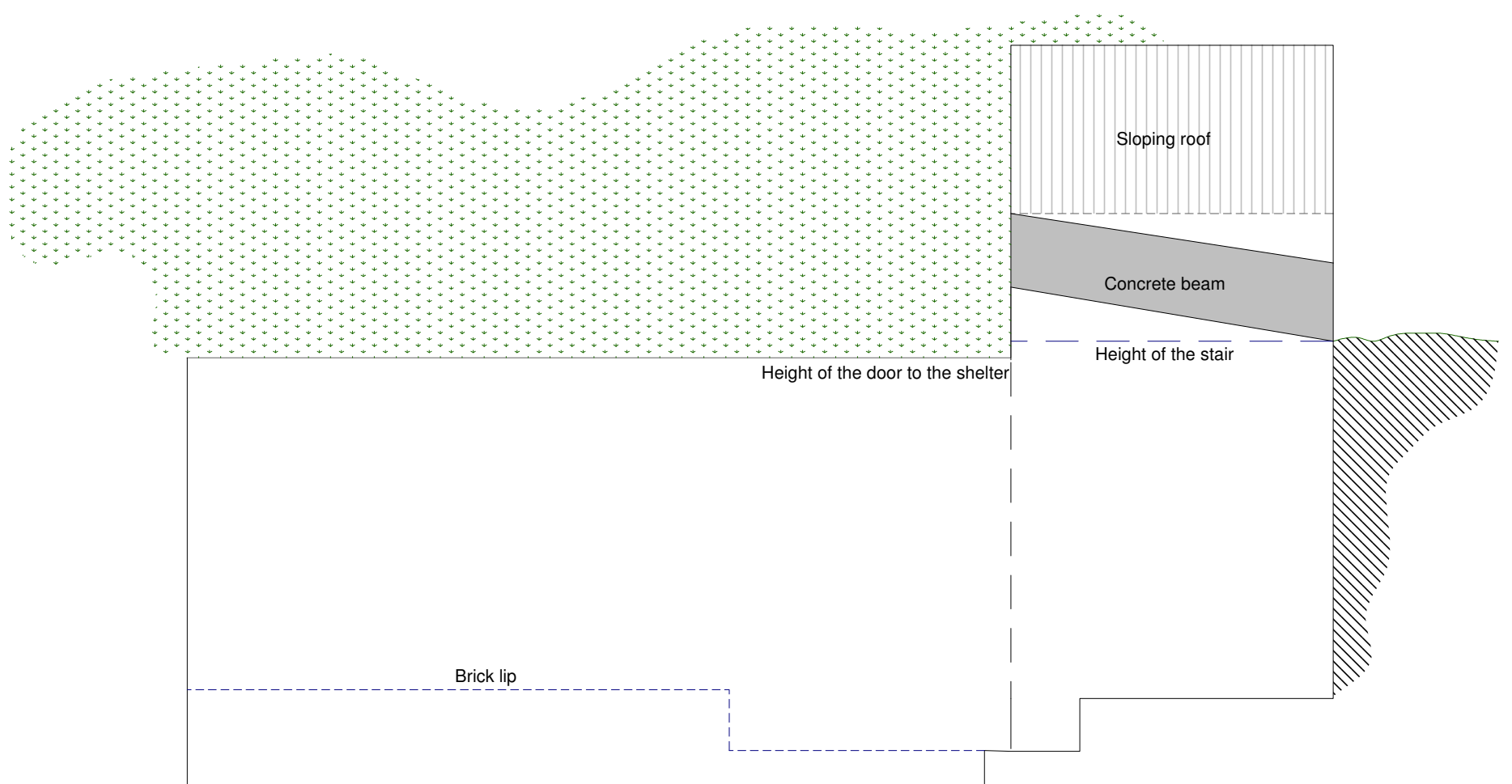


Figure 4. Internal and external plans and plate locations



South facing elevation



West facing sectional drawing



ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT SERVICES		
Project Name: High Causeway, Whittlesey		
Scale 1: 25	Drawn by: NP	Report No: 94/19

Figure 5. Elevation and sectional drawing

Appendix 2

OASIS Record Sheet

OASIS ID: [archaeol1-374811](#)

Project details

Project name	Historic Building Recording, Land to the East of 54 and 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	A programme of historic building recording was required prior to the demolition of a World War II air raid shelter on land to the east of 54 and 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire. The shelter lies within the grounds of 56 High Causeway, a Grade II Listed Building and as such is afforded curtilage listing due to its association with the house.
Project dates	Start: 22-10-2019 End: 22-10-2019
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	WIHC19 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB5998 - HER event no.
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	AIR RAID SHELTER Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Annotated Sketch","Measured Survey","Photographic Survey","Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND WHITTLESEY 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire
Postcode	PE7 1QA
Study area	30 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 27160 97277 52.558077514399 -0.124037473602 52 33 29 N 000 07 26 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 7m Max: 9m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeological Project Services
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire HER

Project design originator	Archaeological Project Services
Project director/manager	Neil Parker
Project supervisor	Neil Parker
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	n/a
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Store
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Store
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Diary", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Historic Building Recording, Land to the East of 54 and 56 High Causeway, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire
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